



MONUMENT of CAIUS CESTIUS at ROME.

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PROPOSALS
FOR ERECTING A MONUMENT,
BY SUBSCRIPTION,
IN
THE LAUREL HILL CEMETERY,
COMMEMORATIVE OF
NATIVE GENIUS AND WORTH,
AS EXEMPLIFIED IN
THE LIFE AND WRITINGS
OF THE LATE
DAVID RITTENHOUSE, THOMAS GODFREY, ALEX-
ANDER WILSON, AND THOMAS SAY,
CITIZENS OF PHILADELPHIA.

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PROPOSALS, &c.

FROM the remotest periods of human history, in every age, in every clime, and by all nations, *veneration for the dead* has been one of the *most* prominent and reclaiming characteristics of our species. The sculptured bust, the sacred urn, or the colossal pyramid, do not more forcibly illustrate this universal principle, than the humble mound of earth, piously elevated by the untutored savage, in commemoration of the honoured dust of some private friend or public benefactor.

The *sentiment* is co-existent and commensurate with our in-born hope of immortality, and the instinct of an honourable ambition; the last awful link of that mysterious chain uniting time to eternity—the finite to the infinite!

Under the full impression of the force and prevalence of this instinctive feeling, the scientific traveller contemplates with admiration bordering on devotion, the splendid structures of this nature which appear to have constituted at once the glory and the privilege of man in the highest state of civilization and refinement.

The pre-eminence of intellectual Greece and Rome is in no way more agreeably displayed than in the inimitable beauty, grace, and animation, which, like “Minerva from the head of Jupiter,” burst from the cold amorphous rock, beneath the chisel of a Phidias, a Praxiteles, or a Canova!

If, as works of art alone, such brilliant efforts of genius attract our regard and excite our admiration, how much more worthy of our esteem do they appear, when we consider their importance as they influence our *moral* dispositions and affections! for although it is true that the spirit of genius, of virtue, and of departed glory, may live for ever in the hearts of the grateful, as the glowing eloquence of *Pericles* survived the tomb of the Theban patriots who fell at Chæronia—yet so imperious

are the necessities of our nature, and the feverish agitations of worldly strife, as to render absolutely requisite some appropriate and tangible memento of public consideration and gratitude for the services of the Dead, in order to keep alive disinterested and noble reflections and feelings, to oppose and beat back the reiterated surges of oblivion!

The elegant monuments and costly sculptures which ornament Père la Chaise, St. Denis, and Westminster Abbey, as well as similar efforts of genius displayed in all parts of modern Europe, must be viewed with mingled feelings of pleasure and regret by the American traveller, who sees in them so painful a contrast with the indifference observable under similar circumstances in his own beloved Republic, where the study of the practical arts and liberal sciences have always been pursued with avidity, and which rank among their votaries the most enlightened and liberal benefactors of man. And shall this first great Republic of a boundless continent, the home of the philanthropist, the cradle of the brave, yield to rivals whom she ought to have been the first to incite to exertion?

There is consolation however in the reflection, that it is by no means too late to profit by these illustrious examples;—indeed, more favourable auspices could not have been desired, than the recent determination of many of our liberal minded and public spirited citizens, to construct a spacious and public cemetery in the vicinity of Philadelphia, where all, uninfluenced by sectarian divisions, in submitting to “the great leveller of all distinctions,” may be permitted to repose on the bosom of a common mother, and mingle their ashes together.—Certainly a more desirable and appropriate spot could not have presented itself than “Laurel Hill,” which gives its name to the Cemetery. Here the majestic trees, clothed in mingled coloured foliage, reflected by the placid Schuylkill; shaded walks and retired groves, where the wood-robin tunes his matin hymn, all conspire to elicit grave and serious reflections, so much in unison with the time and place—add to which the appropriate ornamental shrubbery, together with varied and numerous specimens of taste and art in the monumental marble and granite which will soon appear as emblems of public gratitude or private affection and love—and we shall have an “Elysian field,” as enduring as the boasted Pyramids of Egypt, which will de-

scend to posterity as a dignified and honourable testimonial of the sensibility to genuine worth, which ennobled the enlightened minds of a great Republic in the nineteenth century.

As one of the first steps toward the consummation of so desirable an end, we beg leave to offer the following proposition to our fellow citizens, confidently believing, should the plan meet with their approval, that an appeal will not be made in vain to the generosity of those who have never withheld their means, when the truly useful is combined with the truly ornamental.

Influenced in the selection by motives unnecessary here to detail, it has been determined to gather together the scattered remains of four among the earliest and most successful cultivators of the natural and physical sciences, whose labours have mainly contributed to enlarge the boundaries of science, or whose inventions have actually benefited mankind; the example of whose lives is well calculated to stimulate the coming generations to noble and generous emulation; and to have these remains conspicuously deposited in the Laurel Hill Cemetery, beneath a monument which shall be a copy of the pyramid of *Caius Cestius*, at the present day one of the most perfectly preserved monuments in the city of Rome.

The departed worthies thus selected are named in the order of time. THOMAS GODFREY, DAVID RITTENHOUSE, ALEXANDER WILSON, and THOMAS SAY:—all fellow citizens, in the possession of whose names any country may well be proud, renowned as they are throughout the civilized world; the two first for their great attainments in natural philosophy, and the others in natural history.

We cannot doubt that the proposed arrangement will meet the unqualified approbation of the friends and relatives of the deceased—and that it would have been equally consonant to the feelings and sentiments of the great and good men whom it is our duty and desire to honour, may be fairly inferred from the testimony of one of them, recorded in the following extract from Mr. Ord's admirably written Biography of Wilson—

“Mr. Wilson was interred in the Cemetery of the Swedish Church, in the District of Southwark, Philadelphia. While in the enjoyment of health he had conversed with a friend on the subject of his dissolution, and expressed a wish to be buried in

some rural spot sacred to peace and solitude, where the charms of nature might invite the steps of the votary of the muses and the lover of science, and where the birds might sing over his grave. It has been an occasion of regret to those of his friends to whom was confided the mournful duty of ordering his funeral, that his desire had not been made known to them, otherwise it should have been piously observed."

Of Say, joined to Wilson in life by friendship and similarity of pursuits, the demise has been of too recent a date, to require us to recall his memory to the numerous friends who still deplore his loss—he published volumes in illustration of American natural history. His remains are deposited in an obscure spot on the Wabash, where he died.

Of Godfrey, too little has been said and known; few even of his fellow citizens of the present day are familiar with the facts and observations upon which rest his undoubted claims to the invention of the *Quadrant* in 1730, subsequently with great injustice attributed to Hadley of London, whose name the instrument bears even now.*

This ingenious and modest philosopher died nearly a century ago. His remains were interred in a private lot of ground near Germantown, without a stone to mark the spot. And although this forms at present a portion of a cultivated field, it is confidently believed that the precise locality has been identified, but ere long, if not rescued from obscurity, will disappear before the progress of improvement.

D. Rittenhouse, F. R. S., and at the period of his death (forty years since), President of the American Philosophical Society, possesses peculiar claims to the regard and veneration of posterity. His numerous improvements and discoveries in astronomy and mathematics, &c., are recorded in every public library, and are familiar to most school boys. His body was interred in his own private Observatory, near the corner of Seventh and Arch streets, and was subsequently removed to one of our city grave yards.†

* *Vide* American Monthly Magazine for 1785.

† "With regard to the usages of antiquity, it is further observable, that, in those early seasons of virtue, men were led by the impulse of a generous spirit to a course of action worthy of being recorded; and, in like manner, the writer of genius undertook to perpetuate the memory of honourable deeds, without any

On the upper portion of the Pyramid will be inscribed the following lines, extending around its four sides—

In commemoration of those eminent men whose remains lie here entombed, this Monument is erected by their grateful fellow citizens. A. D. 1837.

The following is the proposed distribution of the remains, devices, and inscriptions, intended for the different faces of the Pyramid.

On the eastern side, or that nearest the remains of Thomas Godfrey, will be sculptured the figure of his *Quadrant*, with the motto, “*Viam navitæ complanavit*,” followed by the inscription—*Thomas Godfrey, the unpretending genius, the self-taught philosopher, who, as the undoubted original inventor of the Quadrant, has conferred on commercial and nautical science an invaluable boon, and elevated the intellectual reputation of his native country.*

Born in Germantown, 1704.

Died, 1749.

In like manner, on the western face of the Pyramid will be represented the *Orrery* invented by Rittenhouse, together with the *Telescope*, the cherished companion of his exalted profession, reversed and pointing to the earth which has now closed for ever over a brilliant luminary. The motto—“*Spiritus intus alit*.” The inscription—*David Rittenhouse—the friend of God and Man—the philosopher who lived and died like a Christian—one of the most eminent, as he was one of the earliest patrons and benefactors of science in the new world.*

Born in Germantown, April 8th, 1732.

Died in Philadelphia, June 26th, 1796.

On the northern face of the Pyramid, to be represented as a device the “*Bird of Minerva*,” beneath this a hand grasping a torch. Motto—“*Aliis inserviando consumor*.” The inscription—*Alexander Wilson—the faithful historian of the most beautiful*

motives of flattery, and without views of private ambition, influenced only by the conscious pleasure of doing justice to departed merit.”—*Annals of Tacitus.*

At the present moment they are occupied in London in erecting a monument to the memory of Shakspeare, at a cost of £ 20,000.

portion of the animal creation—the guileless votary of Nature, whose laws he successfully interrogated in the majestic scenery of her works—the pioneer of American Ornithology, who sacrificed his life in the arduous pursuit of his favourite science.

Born in Paisley, Scotland, about the year 1768.

Became a resident of Pennsylvania, 1794.

Died in Philadelphia, August 23d, 1813.

On the southern face of the Pyramid. The device a *Bee Hive*. The motto—“*Sic vos non vobis mellificatis, apes.*” The inscription—*Thomas Say—one of the founders of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia—and among the earliest and most successful cultivators of American Natural History, whose laborious investigations and discoveries are an honour to his country, and a bright example to his fellow citizens.*

Born in Philadelphia, July 27th, 1787.

Died in New Harmony, October 10th, 1834.

The undersigned Committee, appointed for the purpose of raising the fund necessary to the accomplishment of the designs herein detailed, will in due time employ an authorized Agent to obtain subscribers' names: previously to entering upon active operations, a meeting of the contributors will be called, and the plan submitted for their definite approval or modification.

CHARLES D. MEIGS, *Chairman.*

FREDERICK BROWN, *Treasurer.*

RICHARD HARLAN, *Secretary.*

Philad., December 19, 1836.